

Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau applauds Senate action

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (Sept. 9, 2009) - Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau President & CEO Rachel Sacco praised the U.S. Senate's passage of a bill that would help boost international tourism in Scottsdale and throughout the Valley, as well as other U.S. destinations. The Senate passed the bill with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 79-19.

If passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, the bill would not raise taxes. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill would reduce the federal budget deficit by \$425 million over the next decade.

"During this difficult economy, it is important to use proven methods to boost our tourism industry, which is critical to the overall economic health of Scottsdale and the state of Arizona," Sacco said. "Hotel workers, waiters, retail store owners, and all of the other workers whose jobs rely on tourism have been impacted by the decline in travel. This bill will help bring in new visitors and new business to Arizona, which in turn will stimulate the local economy and put people back to work."

Rep. Harry Mitchell, who has co-sponsored the House of Representatives version of the bill, also applauded passage in the Senate.

"This is excellent news for one of the most important economic engines in Arizona, our tourism industry," Mitchell said. "I urge my colleagues in the House to now pass this important bill that will help protect the jobs that are directly and indirectly impacted by tourism in our state and around the country."

The Travel Promotion Act, S 1023 in the Senate and H.R. 2935 in the House, would create a Corporation for Travel Promotion specifically designed to promote increased international travel to the United States through advertising, outreach and other promotional activities. The independent, non-profit corporation would be run by a panel consisting of members who have professional expertise in international travel marketing.

Along with the Scottsdale bureau, the Arizona Office of Tourism and U.S. Travel Association have endorsed the bill, which will help reverse the loss of overseas visitors to our country that began with the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

The Act specifies that travel promotion would be paid for by private sector contributions and a \$10 fee on foreign travelers from countries that do not pay for a visa to enter the United States. The legislation requires no contributions from U.S. taxpayers.

Tourism has a multi-billion dollar impact on Arizona's economy. In 2008, travelers spent \$18.5 billion in Arizona. In addition, visitor spending generated 166,900 jobs, \$5.0 billion in direct earnings, and \$2.6 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues.

Current economic difficulties have negatively impacted tourism in Arizona. Arizona Office of Tourism figures show that the 37.4 million people that visited Arizona in 2008 represent a 3 percent decline from 2007 and that direct spending by visitors was down as well.

In Scottsdale, year-to-date 2009 figures through June show that Scottsdale's occupancy is down 13.2 percent, room rate is down 19.7 percent, and revenue per available room is down 30.3 percent.

About Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau is responsible for marketing Scottsdale as a premier travel destination to national and international target audiences, including meeting planners, travel agents, tour operators, incentive planners and individual tourists.